

October 11, 2001

Dear TK,

The Legislature has directed the Washington State Board of Health to convene a “broad-based task force to review available information on the potential risks and benefits to public and personal health and safety and to individual privacy of emerging technologies involving DNA.” I will chair this effort as chair of the Board. Task force members will include representatives from state and local public health officials, public and private purchasers of medical care, health care providers, research geneticists and genetic counselors, privacy and civil rights advocates and experts, citizens, institutional review boards, and the biotechnology industry.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to invite your organization to nominate a representative to participate in this important effort. We expect the Task Force to meet six times between January and the completion of its work in October 2002. Our proposed schedule of meetings is:

January 2002:
(Olympia)

Purpose and role of the task force, legislative requirements for the study, historical perspective on genetics and the Legislature’s interest in the subject.

March 2002:

Overview of policies in other states, evidence of discrimination, discussion of other concerns about the use of genetics information.

April 2002:
(Seattle)

Development of strategies to address privacy concerns, research and development, and uses of genetics information now and in the future. This may include recommendations to the Board on new rules governing access to blood spot samples DOH retains as part of the state’s Newborn Screening Program.

June 2002:

Summarize findings and determine possible recommendations.

September 2002:

Review draft of final report.

October 2002:

Present Task Force Report to the State Board of Health.

Please contact me at (206) 728-1687, ext. 3024, or Don Sloma, at (360) 236-4102 to confirm your representative’s participation by November 1, 2001 or to let us answer any questions you may have.

I look forward to working with your organization on this important project.

Sincerely,

Linda Lake, Chair
State Board of Health